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FORESTRY POLICY OF TYPICAL STATES—NEW YORK

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The State of New York has an area of 50,203 square miles, characterized by a great variety of topography and soil. A commanding feature is the Adirondack Plateau, occupying a large section in the northeastern part of the state; mountainous on the east side, gently sloping on the west; the source of many streams tributary to the Hudson and St. Lawrence rivers, which furnish extensive water power along their courses.

The Catskill region and the Highlands of the Hudson occupy a section in the southeastern portion of the state, a country of rough and broken nature, but interspersed with many rich and fertile valleys. The waters of this section are generally tributary to the Hudson and Delaware rivers.

Between these areas and to the west lies a great body of land forming the central and western parts of the state. It is a region of moderate elevation but varied topography, draining on the south into the Susquehanna and Ohio rivers; on the north into lakes Erie and Ontario and on the east into the Hudson. This area, as a rule, is adapted to cultivation and has a fertile soil.

The Adirondack Plateau is a region with Canadian flora. The softwood trees are mainly spruce, pine, hemlock and balsam, while beech, birch and maple are the predominating hardwoods. The season is short, the climate cold, the soil of low productive capacity. On account of these facts and because it is at the headwaters of so many important rivers, it is a region destined to be permanently devoted to the growing of forests.

The southeastern mountain region has a more general flora and includes birch, maple, oak, hickory and chestnut mainly, with a mixture of pine and hemlock. Considerable portions of the Highlands, like large areas of the Catskills, will be permanently devoted to the production of timber, but the portion nearer the Hudson River and the City of New York will be finally used for residence and park purposes.

New York was one of the first states to develop a lumber business, and for many years it stood first in the point of lumber protection. At the same time, agriculture has been busy in clearing the land of forests until at the present time the proportion of forest and farm land is perhaps at the normal point, thirty per cent of the area of the state, as near as known, remaining under forest cover. This, perhaps, with some changes in both directions, is likely to be permanently maintained.

The forest areas of central and western New York are now furnishing materials for quite extensive wood manufactures, but in time to come they can be expected to produce for local consumption only. They are in small tracts, farm woodlots chiefly, and their ownership must remain in private hands. Co-operating with these land owners will be the chief function of the state in that region. Owners can be taught through public agencies how to handle their wood-lots to better advantage. They are now furnished young trees by the state, at cost, to improve their forest stock. It is possible that in the distant future some kind of regular supervision and regulation might be provided; but, in the main, the protection and handling of these woodlands is the business of the owners themselves, and the products to be derived from them the owners will require for their own use.

The Adirondack region is the one in which the state's interest in forestry matters is of greatest importance. This section is valued for its scenic beauty and used extensively as a health and pleasure resort. It is the area from which, in the future, the great supplies of home-grown timber should come while the forest cover of the mountains in this region is of importance on account of the influence it has on the flow of power streams. All these factors make the interest of the New York public in the Adirondack region large, and that interest has already found expression in the following directions:

First, the State Forest Preserve, an area of one and one-half million acres, acquired largely by purchase since the year 1895. It is a settled policy of the state to continue these purchases.

Second, a state system of fire protection, improved this last year, under which the forest lands of the region, not only state but private, are being protected from fire.

Third, there is a tendency to regulate the operations of private

forest land owners in the Adirondacks. This tendency is yet too new and unformed to make it possible to state when or in what form it will come into play. The best solution of the Adirondack problem, best because simplest and most permanent, lies in state ownership. These woods will be safest for all possible uses; the interests of the whole people will be best secured; more timber will be produced, in the long run, as material for industry, if those areas are in state hands. Fortunately New York is rich enough to maintain a movement of this kind now, and in time the project should be financially profitable.

In the Catskills in a less degree the same principles hold. Considerable areas of true forest land lie in these mountains, and since 1899 the state has been acquiring land by purchase, the holdings in that region now amounting to 110,000 acres.

New York this past season has been maintaining a patrol system for the protection of the woodlands of the state and of private owners in the Adirondack and Catskill counties from fire. The force in the summer season consisted of forty-five superintendents and patrolmen on regular duty, with a large additional force on call, supplemented by a number of observation stations on mountains. During the 1909 fire season, which was rather dry, this system cost the state about \$40,000, and the damage suffered was about \$23,126.00. A fair consideration shows that good results were secured, all things considered, and it is the intention, by steady and persistent effort, to make this force as efficient as possible. Outside the so-called sixteen Forest Preserve Counties, the forest land is protected from fires by its owners or by supervisors of the town, who are responsible under the law.

New York state has, this year, been trying two experiments that are likely to be of interest to other commonwealths. A section of the forest fire law, affecting the Forest Preserve Counties, enacted in the Legislature of 1909, requires that all softwood trees cut in these counties shall have all the branches cut off from the stem, so that they may fall to the ground, rot quickly and thus reduce the fire danger consequent to lumbering. Fair success has been secured in administering this law and the measure of protection is believed to be worth the increased cost.

The other experiment relates to the Highlands of the Hudson where some forty thousand acres of mountainous forest land, in-

cluded within certain prescribed boundaries, though owned by private parties, have been put under the supervision of the Forest, Fish and Game Commission, to be managed "according to the methods," as the law says, "of modern forestry." A forester has been on the ground this past season, studying the different elements of the problem, organizing fire protection and determining what may be done under the law for the improvement of conditions. No results are yet at hand that are especially valuable, but the outcome of this attempt to regulate the use of private forest property will, of course, be interesting.

The forestry interests of the state are in the hands of the Forest, Fish and Game Commission, of which Hon. James S. Whipple is Commissioner. The force of the office at present consists of a superintendent and assistant superintendent of forests; four technically trained foresters; five inspectors employed largely in summer in looking after railroads; four superintendents of fires employed by the year who can, at certain seasons, be used in the protection of state property; and a considerable number of fire patrolmen and game protectors employed the entire year, who can be called on for the same sort of service.

The peculiar position in which the forest preserve is situated will be gathered from the following sentences embodied in section 7, article 7 of the state constitution.

The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

This provision stands in the way of the reasonable use of the state forest and also bars out much legitimate business by private parties. It is expected that in the near future this provision will be modified in the interest of water storage, good roads, utilization of dead and down timber and the leasing of camp sites.